



September 30, 2013

Senator Rick Jones, Chair  
Senators Tonya Schuitmaker, Tory Roca, Steven M. Bieda  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Michigan Senate  
Farnum Building, Rm. 110  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

RE: SB 471--Restricting access to juvenile criminal records

Dear Senators Jones, Schuitmaker, Roca and Bieda:

Please include this letter as part of the testimony opposing SB 471 as it would bar access by the public to criminal history information on juveniles. I regret that a representative of our group cannot attend to testify in person.

The Michigan Coalition for Open Government opposes this legislation that further bars the disclosure of relevant information that could be vitally important to the public safety and welfare of Michigan's citizens. It codifies a policy decision by the State Police that would continue the expansion in Michigan of hiding what previously were public records from public disclosure.

The House is currently considering legislation that would create secret mental health courts, delay access to traffic accident reports for 30 days, and the list goes on. The state Supreme Court in its discussions on mandating a statewide e-filing docket management system for courts likewise is seemingly unconcerned about ensuring public access by citizens to court filings.

Legendary *Detroit Free Press* staff writer Jack Kresnak regularly used juvenile records in his stories--stories that exposed problems, corruption, errors and malfeasance within the criminal juvenile justice system. Kresnak's stories saved lives, changed laws and made Michigan a better, safer place for all of its citizens.

If this bill had been law then, those stories could never have been told. The losers would be Michigan citizens, both children and adults. Please, let this bill die in your committee.

This proposed legislation, SB 471, may be intended to be a way of letting juvenile offenders escape their past, but there is a functioning law already in existence in Michigan. Expanding the Holmes Youthful Training Act (MCL 762.11) is a better, established approach to dealing with criminal violations by juveniles. Hiding from the citizens of Michigan what has historically been public information is a mistake and potentially threatens the public safety, health and welfare of the people of this state.

The Michigan Coalition for Open Government is a tax exempt, Michigan nonprofit corporation founded to promote and protect transparency and accountability in the governments of the people, by the people and for the people at the local, state and federal levels.

The Michigan Coalition for Open Government asks that the Judiciary Committee permanently tables SB 471. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Briggs-Bunting". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a trailing flourish at the end.

Jane Briggs-Bunting  
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